MINERAL KING NEWSLETTER

PUBLIC WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

The initial public workshops, completed in early May, were attended by approximately 400 people. Ideas shared at these meetings ranged from general concerns about management of Mineral King to specific proposals for the types of activities that might be appropriate and where they might be located. This newsletter summarizes the range of opinions, ideas, and concerns expressed in the various workshops. A comprehensive analysis of the public workshops is available at Park Headquarters and will be an integral part of the formulation of alternatives. This early analysis represents only the initial stage of public involvement, and we will make every effort to maintain communication with you throughout the planning project.

Summary of Public Concerns

Visitor Use

This topic produced a wide range of possibilities for consideration at Mineral King. A principal issue was potential for winter recreation activities. The suggested uses ranged from provisions for downhill skiing to allowing only passive winter actvities (cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, etc.). Within that range various participants addressed associated access and facility development questions. Another major concern was the trail system. Several people indicated a desire for improvement in the present hiking trails. Specific proposals on rerouting existing trails and adding a valley loop trail (possibly paved for handicapped access) were also received. Finally, pack trips originating from the valley generated a significant number of responses. While some people did not consider this activity compatible with the area, most comments addressed the possibility of relocating the pack station to another site within Mineral King.

A major concern was the possibility of overcrowding occurring at Mineral King. Many comments suggested a limit on the numbers of visitors allowed in the area at one time. Approaches discussed included a quota system, a strict permit limit, a carrying capacity analysis, or denied access once campgrounds and parking spaces are full. Economic considerations were also important, with suggestions for making the area self-supporting by charging users for the cost of managing the area and making the cost of the various alternatives an important determinant of the plan.

2023.009.0347a

Development

Discussion of development basically related to the types of visitor activities people would like to see allowed. A major development issue was skiing. Depending on the type and scale of winter use, development ideas ranged from a facility similar to the Disney Productions proposal to no facilities for winter use. Another major issue was camping. While some people wanted either additional campsites or an upgrading of existing campgrounds, others wanted no change from present conditions. Possible locations for the expansion or relocation of campgrounds included Camp Conifer, Atwell Mill, Sunny Point, Highbridge Creek, and Mosquito Creek and other less specific areas. A consensus of public opinion determined that the area requires additional sanitary facilities at various locations.

The issue of visitor services drew many specific proposals. Support for a small-scale store in Silver City was fairly general; however, several people suggested a concession operation would be inappropriate. Regarding Park Service facilities, most people opposed a large visitor/information center but agreed that an entrance station and a small visitor center (perhaps adaptive use of a historic structure) would add to the area.

Access and Transportation

This subject elicited response from several groups. Discussions ranged from no facilitation of access to the possibility of some form of public transportation, optional or mandatory. Detailed comments were outlined for handicapped access.

Regarding the public transportation system, options were presented that suggested a staging area would be appropriate at Three Rivers, Hammond, or Silver City. One proposal called for public transportation originating in Springville rather than Three Rivers. Another concern over public transportation was the cost, with several people indicating that users of the system should pay for the service.

The existing road also received several proposals. Some suggested maintaining the road as is while others desired an improved road. The improvements ranged from widening the road or development of passing lanes to paving or oiling the unpaved portion of the road. Conversely, several people wanted the road removed back to Silver City or further. Plowing the road for winter access received both positive and negative responses. Some people proposed the prohibition of large recreational vehicles. Some also deemed off-road vehicle use inappropriate, but others wanted specific areas set aside for this activity. Snowmobile access was

2023.009.0317 b

another major issue, with stated concerns being the development of snowmobile trails, the restriction of snowmobile access to cabin owners only, and a total ban on motorized winter use.

The final transportation question revolved around parking facilities. Many suggestions indicated that parking should be removed from the valley. While a few wanted the location and number of parking spaces to remain as they are today, almost everyone determined that existing parking is badly disorganized and in need of correction. Some wanted more parking provided. Locations suggested for parking included the dump site, Monarch Creek, snowline for winter and summer, and Silver City. Regardless of whether parking is relocated or expanded, most considered the development of large parking lots incompatible with the area's aesthetic values.

Private Lands and Permittees

This topic generated several concerns. Some sentiment was expressed for the immediate acquisition of all private and leased lands, especially undeveloped land in the valley. However, the majority of the comments addressed the retained ownership of these lands by individuals. Suggestions included perpetual private ownership and private ownership for the lifetime of present owners or a definite term of 25 years. It was stated that the cabins are a historic use of the area and should be retained. Additionally, it was stated that private ownership may provide security and protection for the entire area. Another issue concerned the right of transfer of private property, and it was suggested that individuals should be allowed to sell to someone other than the federal government. Finally, it was stated that if acquisition is necessary, lands should be acquired only from willing sellers at a fair market value.

Resources Management

Several concerns were raised that relate to this topic. The consensus was for some method of protection of the Mineral King caves. The issue of fishing and hunting received divided responses. Generally there were a number of specific proposals for the management of wildlife resources. Fire management suggestions included allowing natural fires to burn, prohibiting open fires outside of designated areas, or conversely, not instituting an open fire policy. The question of retaining the lake impoundments received both pro and con responses. Finally, several people suggested that wilderness designation would be the appropriate method of preserving the natural values of the area. Of course, other participants disagreed.

2023.009.0347 c

The cultural resources and historic character of the area were deemed an important consideration of planning for Mineral King.

Regional Concerns

Some people indicated that Mineral King should be analyzed in a larger context including Three Rivers and adjacent park and forest lands.

The above is only a summary of the many comments received. A complete list is available at Park Headquarters. However, if an issue concerns you and is not reflected in this newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact us. We also welcome any additional thoughts you may have regarding Mineral King. We thank you for your participation in the workshops. Your discussions helped us gain a clearer understanding of the issues and opportunities for Mineral King. They also allowed us to expand our mailing list and therefore reach a larger public. If you have friends or know of organizations interested in being included on the mailing list, they can contact us at Park Headquarters. The next major phase of public involvement will occur after the alternatives have been developed and analyzed. Once that task is completed, you will have an opportunity to review and comment. Again, thank you.

Bill Koning, Planner
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks
Ash Mountain
Three Rivers, California 93271
Telephone: (209) 565-3341, ext. 42

2623.009.0347 d

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Mineral King Planning Team
Ash Mountain
Three Rivers, California 93271

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, $300

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INT-417

U.S.MAIL

DR RICHARD & KATHRYN J KOCH
2125 AMES ST
LOS ANGELES CA 90027

SEKI
MK P

2023.009.0347e